



Pray. Last week, we kicked off a brand-new message series that's going to take us all the way through Labor Day weekend. We're spending the summer walking through the life of King David. He's one of the most significant people in the Old Testament—his story takes up nearly 60 chapters! And on top of that, he's credited with writing about half of the 150 Psalms.

Today, we are looking at what is probably the most famous event from David's life, his defeat of Goliath. "David and Goliath" is a cultural and household phrase, regardless of religious belief, to refer to a situation where an underdog defeats the prohibitive favorite: The USA defeating Russia in 1980 for the gold medal in hockey; Ford Motor Company winning the 24 hours of LeMans race not just once, not just twice, not just three times...but four straight times in the 1960's<sup>1</sup> and many others.

This morning, we are in 1 Samuel 17 in the original David and Goliath event. It takes up 58 verses. We're not going to read them all this morning (or even all the verses listed as the Scripture passage this morning). I'll summarize some and we'll read other parts. The setting is that Israel's army, under the leadership of King Saul, is up against the Philistine army. They have one guy, Goliath, who keeps coming forward and taunts and challenges the Israelites. **"Am I not a Philistine, and you are not the servants of Saul? Choose a man and have him come down to me. If he is able to fight and kill me, we will become your subjects; but if I overcome him and kill him, you will become our subjects and serve us"** (Goliath, in 1 Samuel, 17:8-9). This went on for several weeks.

Now, the main lesson we learn from David and Goliath is that: **You can face your giants with courage when your confidence is in the Lord.** Out of the whole sermon today, that's the main thing I want us to take away. But notice in the verse I read just a moment ago, that when Goliath taunted the Israelites, he said, "...are you not servants of Saul?" And Saul was as fearful out there as any of them, according to this chapter. So, their eyes are not fixed on the Lord...their identity is not rooted in being a servant of the Lord

most High...they're focused on serving Saul, who's leading from a place of fear.

We might wonder why they didn't all just rush out there and take on Goliath themselves. Certainly the Philistine army would have come forward if they'd done that, for starters. Some of it might have been cultural warfare rules at the time from the Ancient Near East, where it was common for one representative of an army to battle another as we see here. And Goliath's sheer size and armor (9 feet tall according to the text, plus shield bearers in front of him, and his own armor), plus his constant taunting had a psychological effect on them. **The result is: they feared Goliath more than they trusted God.** Their confidence and identity was not in the Lord, but in Saul, or themselves, or something else...but probably it was in Saul, as reflected in Goliath's taunt that they are "servants of Saul." And Saul is in fear as well.

Now, David would occasionally visit the army from his home, as his three oldest brothers were there. He would take food for them and check on them for his dad, Jesse. (1 Samuel 17:12-22). While visiting them one time, Saul offered a three-fold motivation and reward for anyone who's willing to go fight Goliath (probably in place of himself – most scholars say he would have normally been the guy to go forward...but he's fearful): financial wealth, his daughter's hand in marriage, and exemption from paying Israelite taxes.

Well, David hears about this, and here's what then transpires (**1 Samuel 17:32-37**). So, the main action here is that David is volunteering to go fight Goliath. He's just a kid. We don't know exactly how old, maybe not like 8...but scholars say probably he was 14-17. He's young, by their military standards, regardless. But he has confidence that he can defeat Goliath. So, under the umbrella of our main point that "You can face your giants with courage when your confidence is in the Lord," there are three things to note about this courage and confidence.

**First, we see David's confidence in God, contrasted with Saul and the army that do not do that.** Remember, David was anointed as the king in

waiting because he is a man after God's own heart, as we talked about last week. And David has experience with God's faithfulness that encourages his confidence in the Lord. God has delivered him from other dangerous situations he's encountered while watching sheep, and he trusts God to be with him and deliver him here as well. Later, in verse 45 he tells Goliath that he comes in the name of the Lord God Almighty, and then again in verse 47 he reiterates that "the battle is the Lord's." So, David's identity was not in being a servant of Saul's, but in being a servant of the Lord's. And he trusts God in this situation, because he's learned to trust him in other situations as well. God has prepared him for this moment as David has walked with God, talked with God, had an ongoing relationship with him. And because of that, he has confidence in God.

Next, and this is a deeper look into the first point and "how" Saul has developed this confidence in God: **Second, God has shaped David's faith through other challenges in his life.** Emphasis on "challenges." It wasn't easy aspects of life that shaped him and built his confidence – it was challenging ones that shaped him. As a shepherd, he has encountered bears and lions. He's wrestled them. He's knocked them out with his sling. He's killed them, and he has faith that God has prepared him for this moment, and that God will sustain him in this fight against Goliath. Additionally, though he doesn't say this here, he's overcome family obstacles: we've seen his own dad overlook him in last week's passage, and in verse 28 of today's chapter his oldest brother "burned with anger" at him of being "conceited" and having a "wicked heart." Eliab clearly resents David as the one anointed to be the next king, and those kinds of attitudes in his own family are additional challenges he's faced. He's been prepared for this – physically, psychologically, and spiritually – as he's learned to trust God through all these challenges.

**Third, we see that God has equipped David in his own unique way to face Goliath.** So, his confidence is in God, but he's got his part to play. Saul sees David in his shepherd's clothes, and he's like, "That ain't gonna work. Wear my armor and take my weapon." So, in verses 38 and 39, David dresses in Saul's garb. And after David gets it all on he's like, "This ain't gonna work for me." It's like a 5-year-old trying to use mom's or dad's

baseball glove, or shoes, or even sit in their chair at the dining room table – it just doesn't work. And so, David gets rid of all that stuff in the last half of verse 39, and in verse 40 he grabs his shepherd's staff and bag, his sling, and 5 smooth stones from a nearby stream. That's how God has equipped and trained him for this moment – not with armor and a sword.

He goes out toward Goliath, confident in God and with the equipment he knows how to use. And Goliath taunts him; tries to get under David's skin and erode his confidence. It's worked with the others, but not with David. David charges at him with a rock in his sling, proclaiming his confidence in God, **"You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel whom you have defied" (1 Samuel 17:45).** David doesn't get moved off of his place of faith: his confidence is still in the Lord Almighty.

And then he whips his sling around, lets it fly, and it hits Goliath in the forehead, knocking him out. This is not a kid's slingshot from Target or Walmart. This is a **sling**: it would have a little leather cradle with a couple pieces of rope or braided cord each a couple feet long or so attached on either side of it. You hold onto both ends of the cord with your hand, with the rock in the cradle, and then you whip it around, even spinning your body around to get more momentum, let go of one end of the sling, and the rock goes flying out. Someone trained in how to use this – and David would have had tons of practice – can sling a rock at up to 150 miles per hour and with incredible accuracy.<sup>2</sup> There are some great online videos of people doing it.



**When Goliath falls, verse 49 very specifically says he fell face down.** Ironically, after mocking the Israelites and mocking God, he ends up out cold in a position of worship, with his face down on the ground. David then kills Goliath with Goliath's own spear, and Saul's army goes on to defeat the Philistine army.

So, you put it all together, and David is an unlikely hero. He didn't approach Goliath with armor and a shield and a sword or spear. None of their traditional weapons of warfare were used by him. He used what God had equipped him to use. **He took his God-given experience, his training, and his confidence in God, and went with that.** He declared, just before knocking out Goliath, "the battle is the Lord's." That's where his confidence was.

We see that God is with us in the battles we face. We can be confident in him, and God has prepared us for these moments that might otherwise feel overwhelming. I think about all the experiences God has given me to bring me to this place of being pastor of Rose Hill Church – from formal ministry training things like seminary and internships and ordination exams and other pastoral calls to life experiences that were hard and I had to lean into God in the midst of them. God has brought me through them, shown his faithfulness, and shaped me and my faith to bring me to the point that I have been pastor here for over 12 years. I'm not saying I'm any *good* at being your pastor...but I'd be a lot worse without all those experiences that are opportunities to build confidence in God and be better prepared for whatever comes my way in ministry. The only thing that has gotten worse for me (at least, I think this is the only thing) in those years is my hairline. 😂

And it's the same with you (not the hairline part, hopefully): **We gain confidence in God and are shaped by him through the giants we face.** Now, we may not overcome them all like David does Goliath, by the way. I think a dangerous message from this passage is to say that we always overcome the Goliaths in our lives...that if we just have enough faith in God, we'll always be victorious. David demonstrates in his own life later on that he succumbs to other obstacles, other "giants." Also, the nation of Israel is taken captive by Persia, Assyria, Babylon, and Rome. Sometimes we learn from mistakes and failures – in fact, a lot of people would say that's when you learn the most. God is with us even in those times – comforting us, loving us, caring for us. Either way, we are shaped by these things and our confidence in God, and identity in Christ, is deepened and strengthened as God shows himself faithful to us in the midst of facing these giants.

I don't know what giants you might be facing, but you can face them with confidence when your trust is in the Lord. Marital strife, work-place tensions, scholastic difficulties, an addiction...you can face them with courage because, as David said, the battle belongs to the Lord. He is with you. And the final battle, the one we have no power to win, has been won by Jesus already. The gospel ("good news") message is good news precisely because God has won the battle with sin and death. Death doesn't have the final say. That battle has been won by Jesus – not because he came with a sword, but because he came to do his heavenly father's will. Jesus is our ultimate confidence. Jesus is the King above all kings. He is lord of our lives. He's the one we have confidence in because of the empty tomb. It backs up and gives meaning to everything he ever taught or did. That's where our confidence is.

As Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 15, quoting from the Old Testament: **"Where, o death, is your victory? Where o death is your sting?" (1 Corinthians 15:55).** The victory is the Lord's! That giant is conquered, and we partake of that victory through faith in Jesus.

So, you can face your giants with courage when your confidence is in the Lord. This is true because of God: He is faithful and trustworthy, he has prepared us for the giants of life through earlier trials, and he's uniquely equipped us to face them. Whatever giants you're facing, you can face with confidence, because God's got you. And he's not going anywhere. So, keep developing your confidence in the Lord in your own discipleship practices, in Sunday worship services, in stepping into new ministry challenges and opportunities that the Lord gives you, so you know the Lord deeply in your life and can face your giants with courage. And rest assured that ultimately, the battle belongs to the Lord, death is overcome, the tomb is empty, the victory is his, and we get to share in that with him through faith in Jesus. Let's pray...Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> By the way, if you have never watched the movie, "Ford v. Ferrari", you should. It's fantastic, and comes with the usual pastoral caveat that there are elements of it that don't align with our Christian worldview and morality, etc. But it's a great "David vs. Goliath" story with lessons to learn about leadership and teamwork and family...and that movie moves me to tears every time I watch it.

<sup>2</sup> Basic internet search on the topic, from several sources.